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Two Churches in one Nation

Written by

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I

LOVE AND REASON

"Love first and then logic", says Dostoiewsky. "First we understand, and then we can love", is the watchword of ancient paganism.

The first of these watchwords leads to Christian humility and to general good; the second to worldly pride and general evil.

Five years ago I wrote in the "Guardian" upon the reunion of the Churches. The underlying idea of my article was the above mentioned quotation from the great Russian thinker and poet. I subsequently read the controversy between Charles Kingsley and Cardinal Newman, — the controversy on soul and logic, — and I became still more confirmed in my belief that love, and not logic, must play the leading part in the reunion of the Churches. In other words, let us be united first in practical matters, in our daily, useful dealings with society and humanity, let us more frequently join hands in the charitable work in which we both share; for this will lead us to tolerance, and tolerance in its turn will build the bridge towards the finding of a common logical ground.

To day I see with pleasure the Roman Catholic and English churches in England working together in the same grand patriotic and national cause, united by the same inspiration, the same desire and the same prayers.

The dogma that divides them lies three hundred years behind them, but the love that unites them in the same labours is with them now. And I see with joy, how the representatives of both these Churches in England are united in sympathy and love towards ravaged Belgium, and sorely-stricken Serbia. The Bishop of London is President of the Serbian Relief Fund, Cardinal Bourne has permitted lectures on behalf of the Serbians to be given in Westminster Cathedral, and himself honoured these lectures by his presence. Divided in dogma, these two great

Christian churches are nevertheless united in work. Considering all this, I to-day insist more strongly on my thesis, that **all** Christian Churches have sufficient logical ground in common, on which they may range themselves side by side in the same work, the same mission, and the same charity. The differences in their points of view concerning transcendental formulae, unrealisable in life, can reasonably take a second place.

A proof of the above may be seen in the life of a whole nation throughout several centuries. I mean the Jugoslavs, — Serbians, Croats and Slovenes, — who are one and the same nation in language, in blood, in destiny, and in their aspirations, and who to-day as one man desire to shake off the Austro-Hungarian yoke, and to build up a single undivided state with free Serbia and Montenegro. The proof alluded to consists in this, that in the great national struggle for national union and freedom which Serbia has now waged for a hundred years, her people have risen superior to all divergencies of creed between Orthodox and Catholic Church, and have held fast only to that which unites, not to that which divides in religion.

II

ST. SAVA'S ORTHODOXY

That the Orthodox Church is the best spiritual medium of the national ideal, is known throughout the world. The Serbian Orthodox Church has been this throughout the history of Serbia, from the days of St. Sava, her founder and organiser. St. Sava, the son of King **Nemanja**, — the most famous of the Serbian kings and founder of the Serbian **State**, succeeded in setting the seal of Orthodoxy for centuries to come upon this same State. If the father endowed the Serbian State with a body, the son gave it a soul. And later on, when the body of the Serbian State was destroyed by the Turkish invasion, the soul lived on through the centuries, and suffered, and nothing remained unconquered in this soul but her faith, and the tradition of the freedom of the

past. The monasteries were centres of trust and hope. The priests were the guides of the people, upholding and comforting them. The Patriarchs of Ypek were in truth patriarchs of the people, and like the patriarchs of old, true representatives of the people and their protectors. When the tyranny of the Turks and Arnauts overstepped all bounds in Old Serbia, and the nation was in danger of being exterminated, the Patriarch Arsenje Carnojevich transferred thirty-six thousand Serbian families acrosss the Save into Srem and Slavonia. Catholic countries were sonsidered brother-lands in which these exiles could find shelter. In the eyes of the people both Orthodoxy and Catholicism were subordinate to the one name — Christianity, and contrasted as one to cruel and bloodthirsty Islam.

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In 1804. on the eve of the Serbian Revolt against Turkey, priests were present of the secret gathering in Orashatz, and the leadership of the Rising was offered to one of them, Prota Athanasije, and when he refused, it was offered to Karageorge, Both before and during the Rising, the Church suffered great hardships. Many priests were impaled near Stambulkapia in Belgrade, among them Iguman Paissi, and his deacon Avacum. In 1815, at the beginning of the second Rising, another Iguman, Melentije in Takovo, blessed Prince Milos, encouraged him, and accompanied him in battle. And when the Serbian forces gave way before the Turks at Ljubitz this same Melentije, himself seized the drum and restored the courage of the soldiers. From this he was called "the Drummer", and this nickname clung to him ever afterwards, even when he became Metropolitan of Serbia.

III

CATHOLIC CLERGY AND SOUTHSLAVDOM

It is less well-known that the Catholic clergy in Jugoslavia has also proved itself both nationalistic and patriotic, but it is nevertheless an historical fact. In the struggle with the Turks

the Catholic clergy followed in the steps of their Orthodox brothers, and on countless occasions sacrificed themselves for the nation. Several Ban-Bishops of Zagreb organized the defence of Croatia against the Turks; many Roman Catholic priests in Croatia, sword in hand, defended their country against the enemy, such as (in the 16th century) the Canons Turak and **Fintic**, and (in 17th century) Frater Like **Imbrasinovic** in Slovenia and Father **Marko Mesic** in Lika, and there were Franciscan monks who languished in Venecian dungeons, because they dared to defend their country. It is still less known that through the whole of last century both Churches, the Orthodox as well as the Catholic, carried on an active propaganda for Jugoslav freedom and union, but this also is a fact.

In the 18th century the consciousness of the identity of the Southern Slav nations began to awake, whether under Turkish, Hungarian, German or Italian rule. A Catholic priest from the Dalmatian isles, Dum Andreas **Kacic**, composed poems in imitation of the Serbian national poetry. Dositej **Obradovic**, an Orthodox monk, after acquiring a wider culture in his travels through all Europe, including Great Britain began to write in the popular tongue. **Lukian Mushitzky**, an Orthodox Bishop was also devoted to the Serbian and Slovenic Cause. **Iovan Raic**, the Orthodox Archimandrite, wrote a history of the Serbo-Croats in the Serbo-Crotian tongue. **Sundicic**, an Orthodox priest was read by all Jugoslavs in preference to many finer authors only because he, too, was ispired by the idea of national union, and because he went so far in his identification of Serbs and Croats, that he had one of his books printed in Roman and Cyrillic characters side by side, and some others in Roman characters only, and this, although he was an Orthodox priest. **Valentin Vodnik**, a Slovene Catholic monk of Napoleon's time, was also inspired by the idea of a union of all Jugoslav peoples in one state, which was to be called Illyria, and Napoleon also had this idea. In 1811 Vodnik wrote his Hymn to "Illyria Resurrected", by which he hoped to influence Napoleon to create the Jugoslav State.

'Napoleon said: Arise, Illyria..."

This poor Slovene monk had to pay dearly for his ideals. Cruelly persecuted by the Austrian authorities, and cast from one prison into another, he finally died in 1819. And when the Croat, Ludevit Gaj, in the forties of last century, arose with his "Illyrian" — this was only another name for the Jugoslav ideals of to-day — he was enthusiastically welcomed and supported by the Catholic theologians of the seminary in Zagreb who thenceforth became the most active champions of his ideals.

During the first forty years of the 19th century the idea of a united Jugoslavia so far materialized that the **Orthodox** Patriarch of Karlovtzi could instal **Iellacic,** the celebrated Ban of Croatia, whith the unanimous approval of all the Croatian Catholic clergy.

The following is a still more striking example of patriotism before clericalism. In 1848 the Catholic clergy of the diocese of Zagreb met in conference, and passed a resolution including the following provisions:

1) The union of Serbs and Croats.

2) Toleration of creeds.

3) The use of the Old Slav tongue in Divine service in the Jugo-slav Catholic Church.

The Catholic priest **Rački,** one of the most eminent Jugoslav historians, was a great champion of these ideas of reunion, and endeavoured to introduce the Cyrillitza (Cyrillic alphabet) among the Croatians.

The reaction of 1849 brought with it a brutal suppression of all national agitation an aspiration in Austria-Hungary. Austria artificially created different nationalities in her provinces, and called into existence the Dalmatians, Croatians, Slavonians, Istrians, Carniolians, etc., as separate nationalities, even as — after the occupation of Bosnia — the new nationality of the "Bosnians" immediately arose in the world.

But the Austrian terror only succeeded in awakening the Jugoslav national consciousness in all these provinces, which are

inhabited by one nation, homogeneous as the inhabitants of Northern and Southern France. And thus the Austria plan to convert geographical conceptions into historical, national and religious conceptions, was frustrated. This was very clearly shown after the first Austrian defeat. One result of the battle of Solferino was the revival of the old agitation. The enlightened Prince **Michael,** who at this time ascended the Serbian throne, was not only an enthusiast for Jugoslav ideals, but strove actively towards their realization. At his own expense he sent many Slovence, Croats and Bulgarians to college for their education, thus preparing an entire generation for the realization of his plans, — even the Bulgarians; for they, too, as represented by the best of their nation were at one time enthusiasts for the Jugoslav cause.

In Slovenia and Carniola the Catholic clergy were the strongest representatives and champions of the same cause.

Among them **Antun Ashkerz** and Dum **Simon Gregorcic** undoubtedly distinguished themselves above all others. Both were poets; the former was the greatest Slovene composer of epic and ballad poetry. "My muse is a Spartan" he said, "In one hand she holds the sword, and in the other a torch". Simon Gregorcic was the greatest lyrical poet of his nation, His most beautiful poems are patriotic songs. In contrast to the war-like Ashkerz he was a gentle-souled optimist, a pure **anima candida.**

IV

NJEGOŠ AND STROSSMAYER

But above all the divines of Southern Slavdom the **Orthodox Prince-Bishop of Montenegro, Petar II., Niegos,** and **Strossmayer,** the **Catholic Bishop of Djakovo,** tower as the mightiest champions of **National union.**

In all his writings Niegos gave eloquent expression to his grief and bitter distress that religious tradition could break up a nation into separate fragments, each sick and unhappy without the other. In short, the sum of his experience is this:

"Be a Serb and believe what you believe".
Further on he says:

"Do not ask how a man crosses himself,
But whose the blood that warms his heart,
And whose the milk that nourished him".

Niegos did not speak thus from a lack of reverence, but rather because of his heartfelt piety. He conceived religion as a force for unifying, not for disuniting, and it grieved him to see in his country everywhere the destructive results of religious discord. To-day the illustrious Bishop of Montenegro is equally beloved by Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. This was made evident in Zagreb on the 1st of March, 1914, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth. On that day Zagreb was gay with Serbian flags, at a solemn gathering lectures about Niegos were delivered by a Slovene, a Croat, and a Serb, successively. Catholics and Orthodox alike jointly celebrated their national hero. The Austrian authorities were plunged in consternation by this unexpected manifestation of brotherly solidarity between the very elements among whom they were unceasingly endeavouring to promote discord.

Bishop Strossmayer is probably better known to the Western world than Bishop Niegos. He was that great Bishop who so distinguished himself as a Catholic divine and orator at the Vatican Council in 1870. Equally great in his broad religious views, and his national ideals, Strossmayer was in very truth a God-sent blessing to his people. A son of the people, he lived and worked for his people. Everything great that Croatia to-day possesses in the way of national and cultural wealth, is bound up with the name of Strossmayer; everything was created, revived, or amended by him.

But he was not unaided in his efforts and his ideals. He had the unfailing support of the entire Catholic clergy of Croatia at his back; — as the fiery defender of true Catholicism in Rome, — as leader of the propaganda of liberation for all Jugoslav lands from the Austrian yoke, and the union with Serbia

under Prince Michael, — as the founder of the Jugoslav Academy in Zagreb, — or as the tireless builder-up, stone by stone, of the material welfare of the Croatian people. He was in constant correspondence with Prince Michael, with **Michael**, Metropolitan of Belgrade, and with **Gladstone**. His political ideas were readily accepted by the Serbian Prince, and his love of peace and religious toleration earned him the friendship of the Orthodox Metropolitan. His broad-minded culture and sincere sorrow for his people deeply touched Gladstone who, as is well known, did his utmost to help the cause of Jugoslav freedom.

Strossmayer's generation and that which succeeded him, whether clergy or laity, fully appreciated his teaching. Nor did the Austrian government fail to understand it, and they strove by every means in their power to uproot or to destroy the seed sown by the Bishop of Djakovo. But this seed germinated and sprang up in the field, tall and green, till both Germans and Magyars contemplated this dangerous crop with rage and envy. They inaugurated new terrors, new tortures, new inhumanities, new calumnies. Serbia was represented as the black plague-spot of the earth. But these calumnies were not well received by the Austrian Slavs. Then, — especially since 1894, — Austria began her clerical propaganda; but this also failed to influence the souls of the Croats and Slovenes. The Serbo-Croatian tongue was officially suppressed and the Magyar language forcibly introduced in its place; but this only roused such vehement opposition, that even those who had learnt Magyar from interest or curiosity, ceased to use it. Then the Government endeavoured to influence the elections in favor of the Monarchy by new political combinations, r. e. by an arbitrary re-distribution of the electoral districts; but so far from being successful, this measure only resulted in a coalition between Serbs and Croats, who, under the influence of Austrian intrigue, had hitherto always voted separately. This Coalition has in fact during recent years controlled the government of Croatia.

Strossmayer died in 1905, but his physical death only meant

the resurrection of his ideals. Austria-Hungary rejoiced over his death, but her joy was short lived. In 1908 Austria burdened her conscience with a further crime, — the annexation of Bosnia. Instantly it became evident that Strossmayer still lived, indeed that he was more than ever alive. For the annexation of Bosnia was a blow that fell equally upon Zagreb, Ljubljana (Laibach), Trieste, and all Dalmatia no less than upon Serbia and Montenegro. The harvest that Strossmayer and Niegos had sown, was now ripe. Austria saw with sorrow that her prisons were too small to contain an entire nation; but she herself was a dark dungeon for Jugoslavs, irrespective of creeds, for at this juncture she discovered that she could reckon as little on the Catholic clergy as the Orthodox.

Several Bishops sided with their clergy in the national struggle. Thus **Ucellini**, the Catholic Bishop of Kotor (Cattaro) translated the "Divina Commedia" and dedicated his translation to the Serbo-Croat nation, and because of his wish to introduce the Slav tongue into the liturgy Bishop **Dvornik** had to fly from his native town of Zadar in Dalmatia to Constantinople, where he died.

The Catholic clergy of Dalmatia especially distinguished themselves in this struggle against Austria, and in Zadar, where Bishop Dvornik had lived and worked, another priest, Dum **Bianchini** preached Nationalism with religious fervour.

V

THEN CAME THE BALKAN WARS!

Then came the Balkan wars. From these wars Serbia three times emerged victorious, — against the Turks, against the Bulgarians, and against the Arnauts. In Austria the Jugoslavs looked upon Serbia's war as their war, and felt the Serbian victories as their own. Although themselves in servitude, they nevertheless contributed to these victories. Numerous doctors, nurses, volunteers, medical stores and money were sent by the one

brother-nation to the other, and Austria found herself compelled to close her Serbian frontier by a cordon of soldiers. But all in vain! Hearts were full to overflowing, and love waxed stronger than ever. Then came the World-War. All ties between Austria and her Slav subjects were broken. Austria's declaration of war to Serbia was in many respects also a declaration of war to the Jugoslavs in Austria. Arrests, wholesale hangings, and shootings became the order of the day. All Orthodox and Catholic Bishops were placed under police supervision. **Nikodim Milas**, Orthodox Bishop in Dubrovnik (Ragusa) suffered such gross ill-usage at the hands of the police, that he died within a few days.

In Dalmatia, Croatia, Istria and Carniola the prisons were filled to overflowing with Catholic priests. So far as voices from Dalmatia have been able to reach us, we learn that Ivo Separovic, Ante Antic, Mate Skarica and Ivo Lutic have been imprisoned in Dalmatia, and in Istria the following priests who are also national delegates: **Luka Kirac, Anton Andreicic, Sime Cervar,** the canons: **Santic, Zavladal, Mandic** and **Matic,** and two Franciscans; in Carniola fifteen priests of the clerical party. About ten of the leading men of the nation, — journalists, artists and writers — both Cathclic and Orthodox, fled to Serbia, England, Russia and America. They fled but to repeat the smothered cry of ten thousands of their brothers in Hapsburg prisons. And this cry is all the more terrible because it rings through the Catacombs and the Circus Romanus nineteen centuries ago. It is the cry of the priests of Christ, who preached the Way of Truth before God and man, the despairing cry of the martyrs of the nation, who are giving their life for the salvation of the people; the cry of the shepherd whose flock is being harried by the wolf, the cry of noble and enlightened men who open their eyes in vain to behold the light, for around them is only darkness; they open their lips, they stretch forth their trembling hands, seeking the cheerful warmth of the fire, only to find instead the cold stones and mildew-covered walls of a dungeon; they cry for help, but their cry falls dead upon thick stone walls,

and returns like an echo into their hearts. But, as Niegos says:

"From their blood will spring flowers
"For some far-off generation".

VI

LOVE AS UNIFYING MIGHT

The great fact, to which I have alluded at the beginning of this article, is the fact of the unifying influence of religion in the history of Jugo-slavdom during the past century, and especially during the tragic happenings of the present war. Orthodox and Catholics found themselves united in the self — same practical work — in this case in one and the same idealistic struggle for nationality and in common suffering. In this common struggle and suffering they have realized that they are brothers, and were amazed to think that religion could even for one moment divide them. They were amazed to think that such abstract details of religion, like the dogma of the **fillioque** could divide them, brothers, who shared so much common ground in their beliefs, — the belief in the Trinity, belief in the Saviour, in Immortality, in Righteousness, in one Apostolic Church, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the beauty of self-sacrifice for others, and in suffering for what is good and ideal.

It may be objected that this may be so in the day of trouble, but that all may be different to-morrow, with the return of peace. For even in the early days of Christianity there was no division in the Church because of the common suffering, but as soon as persecution ceased, the spirit of sectarianism crept into the world.

On this point I venture to say that history will **not** repeat itself; what has been, will never be again. No sacrifice of blood and human life has ever been made without causing a great stride in history, and a great change in human life. The present world-war, which is calling for unprecedented sacrifices in blood and life, must mean a correspondingly great stride, (forward, let us hope) for humanity, and fundamentally change the aspects of history.

The nations will be drawn more closely together, with or without the approval of the churches. But the Churches, too, should be drawn together, and ultimately be united. They will be united on those great matters, which they all have in common-evangelical, theological, and in the forms of Divine services. The Churches, too, must learn their lesson from this war. They must be careful always to unite in practical work, which needs the inspiration of the Christian spirit and Christian love. For if the Catholic, English and Presbyterian Churches in Great Britain, the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany, and the Orthodox Churches in Southern Slavdom have in war-time found one another in the self-same charitable work and the same patriotic enthusiasm, surely they can be united in peace-time in the sublime work of human civilization.

You will object that there are differences. And I reply: "Certainly there are differences; but the indvidual differences between myself and my neighbours are much greater than those between the Christian Churches, yet nevertheless my neighbour and I meet in the same road, in the same work, and at the same table, and we live together under the same laws; we both rebel against the same evil, and we both defend the same good". You will repeat. that there are differences. And again I reply: "As these differences could be forgotten in war-time, they can also be forgotten in peace-time".

At least this must be the case with us Jugoslavs. During the last centuries we have passed through a repetition of the sufferings of the early Christians. Common struggle and common suffering have taught us to live under the Christian spirit, which animates both Orthodox and Catholic faiths. The State for which Serbia is now fighting will include many Orthodox and Catholic members. The people of this State who have learnt, not from theories, but from life and suffering, will always know how to respect the faith of their neighbours in so far it differs from their own, and to love it in so far as it coincides with theirs. And as the similarities between the Orthodox and Catholic faiths are in a proportion of 90%, there will be 90% of reasons for mutual

love inspired by faith, and only 10% scope for mutual tolerance as regards their "individual" differences. The future Jugoslav State will contain about fifty dioceses, half of them Catholic, and the other Orthodox. All the inhabitants of all these dioceses are at this moment praying that Serbia and her Allies may be victorious, even as the Bishop of London and Cardinal Bourne are praying. The people who were united in bondage, will certainly not be divided in freedom, otherwise freedom would not be better than bondage, but rather worse. The people, who learnt the lesson of love in bondage, will surely continue in love in freedom, otherwise freedom would merely mean a worse temptation for them. The people who learnt tolerance in bondage, will not forget to be tolerant in freedom. Therefore the Serbian government was merely the mouthpiece of the Serbian people when directly after the Balkan wars it proceeded to place Serbia's relations with the Catholic Church on a proper footing, because with the extension of Serbia the number of her Catholic inhabitants would likewise increase. In the midst of the war, the Skuptchina in Nish discussed the project of the Concordate with the Holy See and accepted it. It is known in the Vatican and elsewhere with how much sincerity and broad-minded good-will the Serbians strove to meet the needs and wishes of Catholics living within the borders of Serbia. In the future every Serbian democratic government will be equally sincere and broad-minded in religious matters; and it behoves the Orthodox and Catholic clergy to be unanimous in upraising their people in cultural respects, even as during the dark centuries of slavery they were active in awakening the national consciousness and now are unanimous in suffering with their flocks and in the struggle for righteous ideals of freedom and unity.

All we Jugoslavs are sure that there will be harmony and unanimity between the two priesthoods, the two confessions, and the two Churches in the future Serbian State. It is very difficult for us to prove this beforehand. Whatever may now be said or written, people will reserve the right to believe nothing untill

they see it, just as they reserved their right to believe in Serbia's physical strength until it could no longer be denied. But we have this conviction, because we know ourselves. Our national watchword after this war will be:

"Love first, and then logic".

This watchword should be the watchword for all the Christian Churches, for it is true to the Gospel, to which all the world, — now plunged into a terrible war because of logic without love, — must eventually return. The fences set up between the Churches are incredibly petty. But it had to be that for a thousand years men lived isolated and secluded within these fences, and for a thousand years there was isolated labour and development, strife and discord, passionate reproach and logical recrimination, much blood and many tears, the sin of Cain, and the ever-repeated Crucifixion of Christ, and in the end the European War became necessary. All this had to be, so that Christian humanity might ripen and grow, and outgrow these petty fences, and that each man might behold his neighbour over the fence, that he might feel his heart, hear his lamentations and might extend a helping hand over the fence and clasp him in a brother's embrace. All this was necessary through thousands of years, till Christian men became convinced that the distance between man and his brother is not to be measured by miles, as he had imagined, but by inches! All this had to be so that all Christian Churches, and all humanity might repeat with conviction:

"Love first, and then Logic!"